

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 are pending. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended to even further distinguish over the applied reference. The amendments to claim 1 are supported by the original specification at, for example, Fig. 5 and page 34, line 16 - page 35, line 12 (corresponding to paragraph [0100] of the corresponding U.S. Patent Publication No. US2004/0118163). Thus, no new matter is added by the above amendments.

Applicants submit that the above amendments should be entered after Final Rejection at least because: (i) they do not raise any new issues in that they further clarify the features argued in the previous Office Action, (ii) they do not raise the issue of new matter as explained above, (iii) they do not add any new claims, and (iv) they at least place the application in better condition for appeal should an appeal be necessary. The amendments were not made previously because these amendments are made in response to the comments contained in the May 8 Office Action starting three lines from the bottom of page 2 and extending onto page 3, demonstrating the Examiner's interpretation of the claims. Entry of the amendments is requested.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) or (e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,087,283 to Jinbo et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Jinbo et al. does not disclose or suggest the claim 1 thermal treatment apparatus in which a heat generator is provided on a surface of the furnace and has a dimension in a vertical direction so as to surround a vertical plane of a synthetic silica glass ingot or block when the ingot or block is in the first position inside the furnace. As explained in Applicants' previous response, the apparatus shown in Fig. 10 of Jinbo et al. is analogous to the apparatus shown in Applicants' Fig. 4, and has a burner 406 that extends through the upper wall of the furnace, rather than a heat generator provided on a surface of the furnace and having a

dimension in a vertical direction so as to surround a vertical plane of the synthetic silica glass ingot or block, as recited in Applicants' claim 1.

The amendments made to claim 1 moot the comments made in the March 8 Office Action starting three lines from the bottom of page 2 and extending to page 3, line 8. That is, claim 1 now clarifies that the heat generator is provided on a surface of the furnace having a dimension in a vertical direction so as to surround a vertical plane of a synthetic silica glass ingot or block, and "synthetic silica glass" has been changed to "synthetic silica glass ingot or block" to distinguish over "the initial amount of deposited silica" referenced on page 3, lines 5-8 of the March 8 Office Action. Such an "initial amount of deposited silica" is not a synthetic silica glass ingot or block and would not be considered to be such an ingot or block by one having ordinary skill in the art. Accordingly, one having ordinary skill in the art would recognize that the combination of features recited in claim 1 is not disclosed or suggested by Jinbo et al.

As explained Applicants' specification, the claimed thermal treatment apparatus is capable of homogenizing the distribution of birefringence values of the synthetic silica glass ingot or block due to the arrangement of the heat generator. The burner 406 of Jinbo et al. does not perform such a function because it is not a heat generator provided on a surface of the furnace having a dimension in a vertical direction so as to surround a vertical plane of the synthetic silica glass ingot or block.

Accordingly, claims 1 and 2 are patentable over Jinbo et al. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe anything further would be desirable to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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